Gala

CIVIL RIGHTS COMMITTEE
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CONNECTION

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A COMPENDIUM OF CIVIL RIGHTS NEWS

FEDERAL ELECTION

Candidates' Poll on Gay/Lesbian Rights

The candidates were asked the following questions, either in person or over the telephone: were they supportive of gay/lesbian rights in general? Did they favour the inclusion of "sexual Orientation" in federal and provincial human rights legislation? Would they speak in favour of such legislation in the House of Commons? Here are the results:

EDMONTON EAST

LIB - Peggy Blair - Did not respond
NDP - Ross Harvey - Yes
PC - Bill Lesick - Will not respond until after the election

EDMONTON NORTH

LIB - John Loney - Yes
NDP - Nels Rissling - Yes, and would speak out if asked
PC - Steve Paproski - Yes
REF - Erich Bier - Why not?

EDMONTON NORTHWEST

LIB - Colin McDonald - a qualified yes
NDP - Marie Gordon - Said she would work proactively in favour
PC - Murray Dorin - Said he supported the government's report on the issue
REF - Paul Sherstan - Would prefer a public referendum on the issue

EDMONTON SOUTHEAST

LIB - Chris Peirce - Yes
NDP - Harbans Dhillon - Yes (from his campaign manager)
PC - David Kilgour - did not respond
REF - Wes McLeod - No

EDMONTON SOUTHWEST

LIB - Barclay Johnson - Would not respond
NDP - Bob Friedland - Yes, and would speak out in favour
PC - Jim Edwards - Backs the Prime Minister's statement
REF - Chuck Cripps - Serious doubts

EDMONTON STRATHCONA

LIB - Una MacLean Evans - Did not respond
NDP - Halyna Freeland - Yes, and would speak out in favour
PC - Scott Thorkelson - No need for such legislation, but would support it
REF - Doug Main - Did not respond

Gay issue turns Robinson's race into fight for survival

BURNABY — A recent all-candidates' meeting here turned into a screaming match as Svend Robinson was accused of "stomping on Christian principles" as a publicly acknowledged homosexual.

The man was soon shouted down by Robinson supporters who were the majority in the packed hall, but in less than five minutes a woman accused him of advocating sodomy for young boys.

Robinson, an MP for nine years, has stepped out of the closet into a fight for his political survival in the riding of Burnaby-Kingsway.

And despite what he calls a constant "smear campaign" against him, he still thinks it was worth it to be open about his homosexuality.

"If I can win this election, in a working class area like Burnaby-Kingsway, with its strong ethnic minorities, that will send out a message that people should be respected for what they do and who they are, and not be the victims of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation," he said in an interview.

"I suspect that if I win, no one will have to face the type of campaign I've faced."

A member of Robinson's campaign team said he is worried because a number of NDP supporters he has encountered at doorsteps have told him they'll vote against Robinson because he is gay.

Fundamentalist churches and groups like Real Women have joined in a campaign to defeat Robinson. A newspaper being distributed in the riding called the Life Gazette has headlines like "Sodomite Invasion Planned for 1990" and "The End for Svend."

Laurie Geschke from the local chapter of Real Women said her group wants a pro-family, pro-life MP instead of Robinson, and has been going to all the places he speaks to ". . . let people know what he stands for."

An open letter to Robinson being distributed by Real Women refers to AIDS as "a self-inflicted injury" and calls on homosexuals to "abandon their unfortunate habit."

Robinson's political opponents claim the gay question is not part of their campaign.

But Liberal candidate Sam Stevens, a University of British Columbia law professor who lives in neighboring Surrey, said he picked Robinson's riding only because he feels the homosexuality question will defeat him.

Members of Robinson's campaign are dismayed that Stevens, a full-status Cree Indian, is running against Robinson, who has been one of the most vocal MPs in support of native rights.

Conservative John Bitonti, an urban designer, admitted at least one of the hecklers at the raucous election forum was a friend and supporter of his campaign, but said he is not raising the issue.

"It is a factor in the mind of the people when they go out to vote, but I have said a thousand times it is not in my campaign," Bitonti said.

Bitonti's campaign leaflets say the Tory candidate "understands the importance of family values," which Robinson considers code for an anti-gay crusade.

"I resent the charge that I don't have just as much respect for family values," Robinson said, adding that he has raised concerns about children living in poverty and is a strong supporter of high-quality day care.

Robinson said he is getting tired of fending off the attacks on his sexual orientation and doing interviews about it. He said he would rather discuss issues in his riding, like the building of a new pipeline through North Burnaby.

A lot of New Democrats are also tired of the controversy.

"They're trivializing things and that sort of thing is getting in the way of the democratic process," said Jerry Bourasaw, a retired teacher.

Ruth Dixon said most people weren't at all bothered by Robinson's announcement in February that he is gay.

"He does a damned good job."

Even political opponents like Liberal Stevens acknowledge that Robinson has worked very hard for his constituents.

Robinson also faces a harder fight because of redistribution, which would make 60 per cent of his constituents new to him. About a third of the new constituents were represented by popular NDP MP Ian Waddell, who totally lost his riding, but the other two-thirds were represented by Tory Chuck Cook.

Gays shou

WASHINGTON — When my est son, now 20 and at Notre D was eight and showed a taste fo lowing politics, I introduced him role-model politician. It was Ba Frank, then a Massachusetts state islator and now a mmmber of gress. He came to Washington e spring to be the pumper-up of faithful at the convention of Americans for Democratic Action.

Everyone took to Frank. He one-liner witty, idealistic and, bes all, answered all questions of ei year-old fans.

By the recent thinking of a supe court judge in California, I wa much of a father. Frank, it turns was a homosexual, and homosexu Judge John Zebrowski ruled, aren't company for young boys.

The case involved the Big Broth of Los Angeles, part of the natio program that matches adult male lunters — as counsellors, confidar and role models — with fatherle boys. When a 38-year-old man

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